

STUCK ON STAMPS

Stamps send you on journeys

JOHN
FOXWORTH

Stamp collecting is a hobby without borders. Through stamps, young and old alike can travel back through time, meet the famous, tame the wildest creatures or visit exotic places — all from the comforts of home.

Much of the enjoyment derived from stamp collecting is the thrill of unexpected discovery. You can experience it each time you receive a letter bearing a stamp from a foreign country, or better yet, when you discover a stamp that fits perfectly into your thematic or topical collection!

Stamps bring us far more than the simple joy of collecting. They bring us knowledge about ourselves, our country and people, our history and our present culture. Stamps offer us a chance to gain some insights into the world of art, sports, flora and fauna and plenty more.

Stamps are a source of learning about our nation and many others.

Stamp collecting is the world's most popular hobby and so it should be, with the whole wide world to explore!

O Canada

Canada Post has issued a special stamp marking the 30th anniversary of the Canadian flag. The domestic rate stamp depicts a fluttering flag against a typical Canadian background of a lake and pine tree.

The Canadian flag was chosen after lengthy debate in Parliament in 1964 after unsuccessful attempts to produce a distinct flag failed in 1925 and in 1945-46. In all, some 2,000 designs were submitted that were narrowed to just three. All final designs included colors and symbols with historical significance to Canada. The single stylized maple leaf was adopted in December 1964 and introduced in a public ceremony Feb. 15, 1965.

The maple leaf, which had been a symbol of Canada for more than 150

years, is the focal point of the new flag. The two red bars bordering the leaf represent Canada's coasts.

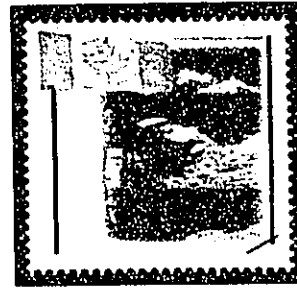
Canadian stamps, covers and information may be obtained by writing the Canada Post agency: Interpost, Box 378, Malverne, N.Y. 11565.

Fine feathered

The U.S. Postal Service has released a new 20-cent stamp featuring a blue jay, for use on postcards. The new stamps were printed by gravure by Stamp Venturers Inc., Richmond, Va. The stamps are available in booklet format panes of 10.

In order to obtain free first day of issue cancels, collectors should buy and affix the new stamp(s) to addressed covers. An additional 12 cents postage to equal the 32 cents first class rate must be added to each envelope (cover). You may also just affix the blue jay stamp to a picture postcard (not a postal card) to obtain a first day cancel.

Place in a larger envelope and ad-



O Canada: Canada Post has issued this stamp marking the 30th anniversary of the Canadian flag.

dress to: Blue Jay Stamp, Kansas City, Mo. 64108-9991, by July 15.

John Foxworth of West Bloomfield is president of the American Philatelic Research Library. You can leave him a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a Touch-Tone phone, then his mailbox number, 1900. His fax number is (810) 644-1314.

BOOK BREAK

Children will enjoy these books in summer

ESTHER
LITTMANN

Are your children reading during vacation? Need some good suggestions? Here are two books that should satisfy. One's for entertainment; the other, for survival.

It's summertime, and the livin' is easy for 15-year-old Pete and his family in Robert Lytle's "Mackinac Passage" (Thunder Bay Press, 1996, \$10.95). Each year they head up north to their cottage in the Les Cheneaux Islands in the Straits of Mackinac. There's no electricity or running water, but who cares? Pete fishes, swims and explores the countryside and waterways between Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas.

But this year is different. Making two big catches — a 40-pound muskie and the winning fly ball at a local baseball game — he attracts the attention of the youngsters from Cincinnati Row, an area of the island inhabited by wealthy families from Ohio. They teach Pete how to sail and invite him to their summer lodge, where vacationers "dress for dinner" and eat Coney deserts other than roasted marshmallows.

Then the summer's ease is disturbed by the sudden appearance of counterfeit bills. Pete and his new friends wonder whether Old Man Goodidge is involved.

Author Robert Lytle spent his boyhood summers in the Straits, much like his fictional character. Thus he writes with an insider's knowledge of this area in the '40s, its geography and local customs.

Strange sounds can be heard from his private island, and a jet black speedboat is spotted coming and going in the dead of night.

The young people's suspicions take them to Mackinac Island and a terrible discovery. Soon they're involved in a chase from Arch Rock to the Grand Hotel, followed by a hazardous trip across the Straits, with two merciless killers at their heels. If the indifferent but deadly storm doesn't overtake them, the sinister hands of the counterfeiters probably will.

Currently a pharmacist in downtown Rochester, author Robert Lytle spent his boyhood summers in the Straits, much like his fictional character. Thus he writes with an insider's knowledge of this area in the '40s, its geography and local customs. "Mackinac Passage" has plenty of interest for the 10- to 12-year-old who likes action stories about the outdoors laced with mystery and adventure. Three maps and numerous sketches by artist Karen Howell, the author's sister, accompany the novel.

Robert Lytle will be at Halfway Down the Stairs Children's Book Store in Rochester 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 12, and at Barnes and Noble on Rochester Road 1 p.m. Saturday, July 15.

'Blinge'

No teen walks away from Charles Fery's "Blinge" without fear and trembling. Either he identifies with the main character, Weldon Yeager, who listens to the sounds of a high school football game from his hospital window while hooked up to life support or, worse yet, with one of Weldon's victims.

But the fear in "Blinge" (Daisy Hill Press, 1992, \$8.95) isn't contrived. Though fictional, the plot rings painfully true: an 18-year-old who trades youth, love and future happiness for the seduction of the bottle. In this slim, 94-page volume, Fery takes his reader on a roller coaster ride of the alcoholic's manic highs and depressive lows.

Ironic saves this book from sentimentality and moralizing, and that's what makes it so effective. The protagonist

tells his sordid story of dependency and debilitation in a perky, upbeat kind of tone, suggesting the self-aggrandizement and phony confidence of the binge drinker. Alcohol, Weldon insists, "enhances his personality and creative ability." It helps him fish money from his dad's account, pass stolen credit cards, steal a car. Alcohol, Weldon believes, makes him invulnerable; that is, until he learns what happened to his right foot and the four college students he encountered on the road.

"Blinge" is the local author's fifth novel for young adults (including "O Zebron Falls"). A former alcoholic, Fery wrote the book hoping that it would spare some young people the hell he went through. After 61 mainstream publishers rejected his work for its unflinching realism, he published it himself and ended up winning major honors from the American Library Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Impossible to parody, "Blinge" is sure to make a profound impact on your teen.

Esther Littmann, a Bloomfield Township resident, is a lecturer in English and German at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield. As an only child, Littmann grew up regarding books as substitutes for siblings. You can leave her a message from a touch-tone phone at (313) 963-9047, mailbox 1893. Her fax number is (810) 844-1314.